

メトロポリス METROPOLIS

August 2016 Japan's N°1 English Magazine
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**THE ART OF
SHOKIBARAI**
A HEAT-BUST HOW-TO

SUPER HIROMI
JAPAN'S JAZZ PRODIGY

FABRIC NATION
TOKYO'S TEXTILE TOWN

IN THE HEIGHTS

A HOLIDAY IN THE HUTS OF JAPAN'S PEAKS



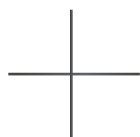


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IN FOCUS

Mt. Fuji at night by Ryoko Kobayashi. Instagram: @ryogoshi



AUG 2016

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Neil Butler
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

EDITORIAL Martin Leroux (SENIOR EDITOR) Thomas Beecher (EDITOR) Tim Young (PROOFREADER) AKARI NISHIDA, DAIKI SHINOMIYA, ALICIA MILES (EDITORIAL INTERNS) **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS** Dan Grunebaum (ENTERTAINMENT) Don Morton (MOVIES) C.B. Liddell (ARTS) **DESIGN** Davi Melo (ART DIRECTOR) **WEB** Minh Douangprachanh (DIGITAL MANAGER) Vandana Nim (DIGITAL ASSISTANCE) **PRODUCTION** Helen Langford (PRODUCTION ASSISTANT) **ADVERTISING** Karl Nakashima, Niki Kaihara (SALES MANAGERS) Lisa Kanai (ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES) ERI ARAI (SALES ASSISTANT) **ADMINISTRATION/ACCOUNTING** Keiko Adachi (ADMINISTRATION MANAGER) MEG ITO (ADMIN INTERN)

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TO-DO LIST

Check full event listings in the WATCHLIST online!
<http://metropolisjapan.com/watchlist>



AUG 5-9

ASAGAYA TANABATA MATSURI

One month after Tanabata ("the Evening of the Seventh") Matsuri—which celebrates the meeting of deities Orihime and Hikobashi—the Asagaya Pearl Center arcade hosts their annual five-day festival. While the festivities take place at the Asagaya Pearl Center, the event will see Asagaya Station and the whole town become embellished with colorful bamboo decorations, while the shopping streets around the station feature large papier mâché ornaments. Decorations range from traditional Japanese imagery to cartoon character favorites that float through the arcade, and these ornaments are sure to renew your childlike sense of wonder and excitement. The festival is reputed as one of Japan's three greatest tanabata festivals, alongside that hosted in Sendai and Hiratsuka, and attracts a lively crowd each year. **Aug 5-9. 1-35-18 Asagaya Minami, Suginami-ku. Tel: 03-3312-6181.** ☞ Asagaya



AUG 6-7

ANTIQUE JAMBOREE

The largest event of its kind in Japan, the Antique Jamboree is enticing for both amateur antique-hunters and pro collectors alike. Knick-knack lovers can relish the wide selection of novelty items displayed by 500 vendors from all over the country, with antiques including both Japanese and Western collector's items, as well as vintage toys and other trinkets. For those seeking rare finds, there's an early-buyer's day before the formal opening of the convention on Aug 6. The event will also host the "shuri-ya yokocho" ("antique repair street"), where professional antique repairmen recommend ways to repair furniture, jewelry, silver items, porcelain, and other items. Check out the event website for a discount coupon. **Aug 6-7, 10am-5pm. ¥800-¥2,000. 3-11-1 Ariake, Koto-ku.** ☞ Kokusai-tenjiijo-seimon.



AUG 6-7

MAKER FAIRE TOKYO 2016

Unleash your creative side this month at Maker Faire Tokyo 2016, back again at the Big Sight. The Maker Faire is equal parts science fair, family fair, and showcase of boundless creativity; and the event is sure to amaze and pique the curiosity of people of all ages. Students, families, and workers are invited to come to the Maker Faire to experience first-hand the wide array of ingenious inventions and activities alongside the latest technologies. In addition to a wide variety of booths and exhibits, the fair will offer an array of outdoor events, live music, and, of course, a range of experiments with a creative twist. Indeed, with such an abundance of science and technology on offer, there's something for everybody. **Aug 6-7. 3-11-1 Ariake, Koto-ku. ¥500-¥1,000.** ☞ Kokusai-tenjiijo-seimon. <http://makezine.jp/event/mft2016/>



AUG 25

TROMBORANGA

Barcelona's Tromboranga has injected new life into the classic sound of salsa, becoming a band of choice throughout Europe and reigniting excitement for the original Nuyorican salsa of the '60s and '70s. Providing the pulse for Tromboranga's trombone section is Venezuelan percussionist Joaquin Arteaga, who reached Barcelona via Caracas and New York, where he honed his mastery of Afro-Venezuelan and Cuban rhythms, Latin percussion, and jazz. Barcelona's melting pot proved to be the location where he could finally put together his project to re-envision salsa, aided by a crew of Spaniards, Latin Americans, and even an Englishman. **Aug 25. Shibuya Club Quattro. 5F, 32-13-4 Udagawacho, Shibuya-ku. Opens. 6.30pm. ¥5,800.** ☞ Shibuya. <http://bit.ly/2a17RL3> Dan Grunebaum



AUG 27

ASAKUSA SAMBA CARNIVAL

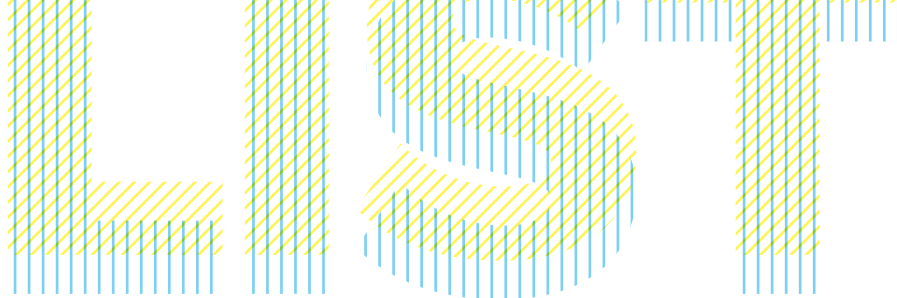
A little piece of Brazil is coming to Asakusa this summer. Experience the largest samba carnival in Japan, which showcases authentic samba dance teams dressed in colorful, extravagant costumes: giant feathered headdresses and all. The day showcases 18 competing teams, each with their own uniquely-themed costumes and float. The parade celebrates Japan's relationship with Brazil (which has the largest Japanese diaspora in the world) and spans five to six blocks along Kaminarimon Dori. The infectious samba spirit and booming drums are sure to make you shake-shake-shake. **Aug 27, 1pm-6pm. Free admission. Umamichi-dori Street and Kaminarimon-dori Street, Asakusa, Taito-ku.** ☞ Asakusa. www.asakusa-samba.org



AUG 27-28

SUPER YOSAKOI GENKI FESTIVAL

With 6,000 dancers from 102 teams, Yosakoi is the biggest festival in eastern Japan, with around 220 Yosakoi festivals in the country currently. The festival dates back to 1954, when the Kochi Prefecture Chamber of Commerce and Industry started coming up with ways to improve their post-war economy. In the 50-plus years since, the festival has continued to enrich the hearts of many, with a diverse and large range of original performances. Visitors can watch various teams from different regions dressed in specific outfits that celebrate the Yosakoi spirit, sure to offer a blast of energy and help beat the summer heat. **Aug 27-28. Various locations in Tokyo.** www.super-yosakoi.tokyo



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AUG 12-14 SUMMER COMIKET 2016

For all lovers of Japanese anime, manga, and games, Comiket (short for "Comic Market") lands at the Big Sight this month. One of Japan's biggest comic-related events, it focuses on "dojinshi" (independently created and published manga), with thousands of amateur and professional Japanese manga artists set to attend and display their art. Although admission is free, organizers recommend that participants buy an event catalog upon entry, and cosplayers must pay a fee if they want to dress up. The event serves as a place for fans to socialize, share skills, and rejoice in their mutual love for all things "otaku." Note that over half a million people are expected to attend over the three days, so expect large crowds.

Aug 12-14, 10am-4pm. Free admission. Ariake 3-11-1, Koto-ku. ☎ Kokusai-tenjiyo-seimon. www.comiket.co.jp



AUG 20-21 SUMMER SONIC

Held in Osaka and Tokyo, Summer Sonic has grown to become one of Japan's hottest-ticket music festivals, with previous years' acts including the likes of Jay-Z, the Red Hot Chili Peppers (who are incidentally playing at this year's Fuji Rock), Metallica, Pharrell Williams, and more. This year's lineup is no less reputable, with headlining acts Underworld and Radiohead set to take the stage. Fans of the English rockers will be treated to set a list of fresh tunes from their recently released ninth studio album, *A Moon Shaped Pool*. Indeed, the theme of this year's lineup seems to be "90s rock nostalgia," with other veteran groups including Weezer and The Offspring keeping it real. Note that upon buying tickets, you're required to choose between left- or right-side access to the main Marine Stage. **Aug 20-21. ¥16,500-30,500. Various locations.** www.summersonic.com/2016/english/



AUG 20-SEP 4 KIYOSE SUNFLOWER FESTIVAL

Since 2008, the Kiyose Sunflower Festival has offered stunning views of vibrant yellow under a clear blue summer sky. The 24,000-square-meter venue is ordinarily used by independent farmers to grow wheat, but sunflowers are specially cultivated for the festival, with approximately 100,000 sunflowers on show. Kiyose is also a famous producer of carrots, so be sure to also check out the "Kiyose Carrot Jam," which uses 100-percent Kiyose carrots, and Kiyose carrot distilled liquor. For those who are looking for new skincare products, there are items such as carrot lotion and carrot soap. And after spending a wonderful day walking through beds of sunflowers, visitors can also stroll through the neighborhood district and shop for fresh vegetables and local goods. **Aug 20-Sep 4. 3 Shimo Kiyose, Kiyose-shi. Tel: 042-492-5111.** www.city.kiyose.lg.jp



AUG 27-28 TOKYO KOENJI AWA ODORI

Now in its 56th year, the Koenji Awa-odori is a Tokyo institution, with 10,000 dancers set to flood the streets of the trendy west Tokyo neighborhood of Koenji for a weekend of dance, color, and "spreading smiles"—as this year's theme implies. The festival, which takes place in different forms all across Japan, supposedly dates back to the 16th century, when a Shikoku-based *daimyo* treated his citizens to festivities following the successful construction of a castle. And the spirit certainly lives on today—an estimated one million gawkers planned to visit Koenji alone. Dancing is obligatory, so be sure to wear good shoes. **Aug 27-28, 5-8pm. 2-3-4 Koenjiminami, Suginami-ku & 2-3 Koenjikita, Suginami-ku.** ☎ Koenji. www.koenji-awaodori.com



AUG 29 SAHRA HALGAN IN CONCERT

Born to a family of traditional singers, Sahra Halgan arrived in Europe in 1992 as a political refugee from her native Somaliland, a self-proclaimed independent country unrecognized by the international community. Halgan was recently the subject of film about her return last year to Somaliland, and has just released an album of haunting songs, some of which she wrote for soldiers fighting for independence. On the front lines, Sahra improvised as nurse and sang to soften the suffering of the wounded in the middle of the jungle. Little Sahra became "Sahra the Fighter" (Sahra Halgan), as she was called by one of the country's independence radio stations. After the film and performance, Halgan will participate in a question-and-answer session. **Aug 29. French Institute Tokyo.** ☎ lidabashi. www.institutfrancais.jp/tokyo/ Dan Grunebaum



UNTIL SEP 25 **EDITOR'S PICK** ECO EDO NIHONBASHI 2016

It goes without saying that the east Tokyo neighborhood Nihonbashi is a bastion of Japanese culture and tradition. Eco Edo Nihonbashi offers a taste of the old infused with all the lurid curiosities of modern Japan. With a goldfish theme, the festival provides an abundance of offerings, including a goldfish-themed "Sweets Walk," featuring 58 Nihonbashi shops selling goldfish-themed sweets; a "Giant Goldfish Lanterns" display, which lights up along the entrance to the Coredo Nihonbashi building and along Naka-Dori; and a "Goldfish Trolleybus," which really speaks for itself. The festival also features the highly-popular Art Aquarium, a *kingyo*-inspired light-and-fish display that takes you on a mind-bending journey through Edo Japan (admission, ¥600-1,000). **Until Sep 25. Coredo Nihonbashi. 1-4-1 Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku.** ☎ Nihonbashi. www.nihonbashi-tokyo.jp/en/

CAMPING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Mountain hut stays in Japan

BY JOAN BAILEY

Those looking for a taste of the outdoors but not particularly interested in carrying lots of gear need look no further than Japanese *yamagoya* and *sansō*. Translated as “mountain huts” or “inns,” these are lodges often set on peaks or in passes near the peak on mountain trails. In a country long traversed on foot and with an interior full of mountains, the huts were a natural development. Anywhere from a few hours to a few days in from a trailhead, these lodges offer the hiker’s equivalent to a five-star hotel: comfortable and clean toilets, futons and pillows, and at least two hearty meals in good company.

Here are a few of our favorites to entice you up and away!



KUMOTORI SANSŌ

Set just 200 meters below the summit of its namesake; Kumotori Sansō, Tokyo’s highest peak at 2,017 meters, is a sprawling two-story wooden building that is a hiker’s haven. Founded in 1924, the hut straddles Saitama and Yamanashi Prefectures along with the great metropolis. Shintaro Arai, manager since 1960, and his son Koichi welcome hikers, and with gentle encouragement share tales of the mountain’s seasons and past hiking adventures. The 200-bed sansō was remodeled in 1999, but retains a rustic feel. Natural wood breathes warmth and ease as hikes doze on their futons in tatami-floored rooms or munch on piping hot meals in the dining hall. Outside are picnic tables where a cold beverage can be enjoyed or for simply taking in the sunrise.

2-13-3 Nosakamachi, Chichibu-shi, Saitama.

Open year-round. ¥7,800 with two meals; ¥5,300 without meals. Tel: 04094-23-3338 (8am-8pm for reservations and enquiries). <http://kumotorisansou.com>

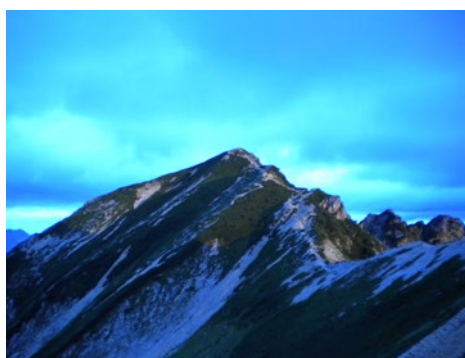
SONBUTSU SANSŌ

Located roughly six hours up from Yabetsu Toge (pass) in Kanagawa’s Tanzawa Range is Sanbutsu Sansō. A bit worn around the edges from the weather that sweeps over the bald mountaintop that Sanbutsu Sansō rests on, the sansō is perfect as a first stop before heading deeper into the mountains or for a single-night stay. Dinner is all homemade—curry rice with *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles), miso soup, a small salad, and sliced fruit for dessert—as is the *oden* breakfast. The staff hauls up all supplies, which is admirable, given that some of the trails require chains and ropes to navigate. Views of Mount Fuji



and the cushy futon beds are just right for trail-weary bones.

1-7-2 Uzuhashi, Matsumoto-shi, Nagano.
Open Apr 27 to early Nov (closed in winter).
¥9,500, with dinner and breakfast; ¥6,500
without meals. Tel: 090-2641-1911. www.yarigatake.co.jp



and the valleys in between to the west are nothing short of spectacular, and as night falls, it's a pleasure to watch the lights flicker over the populated plain to the east. And there's a hut cat who, free of charge, will sit on your lap for as long as you wish. Purrfect. **Tounotake-sanchō, Hadano-shi, Kanagawa.**
Open year round. ¥6,500 with dinner and

breakfast; ¥4,500 without dinner. Tel: 090-2569-6013. www.cnet-sb.ne.jp/sonbutu

YARIGATAKE SANSŌ

Set on the shoulder of Mount Yari in Japan's Northern Alps, Yarigatake Sansō is a popular destination for hikers exploring some of the country's most breathtaking trails. From here, hikers can venture along the ridges for spectacular views or continue on to other huts for multi-day treks. Open only a little more than six months out of the year, visitors can still get a taste of the four seasons here with snow in April, baby grouses and alpine flowers in July, vivid color in September, and with snow once again in October. Yarigatake sleeps 650 people during peak season, although it's worth noting that hikers are never turned away. Belly-filling meals are served in a cozy dining room at long wooden tables,

MOUNTAIN HUT ESSENTIALS

1. Ear plugs, because other hikers tend to snore.
2. Solar charger, because outlets are at a premium.
3. Maps, particularly the Shobunsha Yama-to-Kogen series for the area, because it's very possible to get lost.
4. Instant coffee and/or powdered creamer, because neither is usually available at the huts.
5. Flip-flops, because putting hiking boots on to go to the outhouse is the last thing you want to do.

SHOKIBARAI

A 10-point plan to keeping cool this summer

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

When it's summer Japan, all the *jimejime* (humidity) and *hitoairando genshō* ("heat island phenomenon") may have you suffering *natsubate* ("summer fatigue"). This is where *shokibarai* comes in.

"Shokibarai" roughly translates to "cheering the mind and body to dispel the heat," and has its foundations in the traditional Chinese medicine principle of Yin-and-Yang foods, where Yin is to "take in that which cools the body." So beyond fanning yourself with a sensu or uchiwa and sprinkling the street with water, shokibarai has a list of remedies to help you exorcise summer's heat demon.

1. DO AS THE SAMURAI DID: EAT UMEBOSHI

Innocuous-looking but packing a punch, the powerfully sour *umeboshi* (pickled plums) have remarkable medicinal qualities. They are said to be a samurai-endorsed superfood, eaten

between battles to promote healing, and during battles to boost stamina. High acidic levels, calcium, iron, and phosphorus mean *umeboshi* have an alkalizing effect on the body, neutralizing fatigue, boosting metabolism, and detoxifying organs. They're also an ideal hangover remedy.

2. ENJOY FROZEN TREATS

The seasonal fanaticism of the Japanese culinary world extends even to the ice cream selection of convenience stores and dessert chains. More fruit-based varieties and flavors feature in the seasonal lineup, like sudachi lemon and Fuji apple. Popular sweet bun "melonpan" gets a summer makeover as Melon *Aisu* (filled with ice cream). The hallmark of summer street food, however, is *kakigori* (shaved ice), a ubiquitous treat popular since the Heian Period. Sake brewery Hakutsuru even releases an iced junmai ginjo.

3. EAT COLD VERSIONS OF WINTER DISHES

This is similar in theory to the nourishment of cold pizza the morning after, but different in execution. Several archetypal Japanese hot-pot and broth-based dishes are reappropriated for the summer months. Udon, soba, *yudofu* (tofu in dashi kombu), and shabu shabu become *hiyashi udon*, *hiyashi soba*, *hiyayakko tofu*, and *rei shabu*—the prefixes denoting "cold" or "cool."

4. SIP ON AN EDO-ERA COCKTAIL OF MIRIN AND SHOCHU

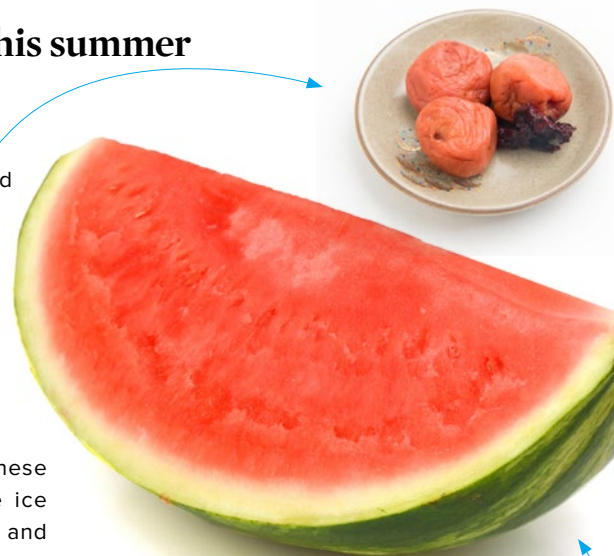
Before mirin was a seasoning, it was a tippie, and one particularly fancied by the upper class during the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868). Called "*yanagikage*" at the time, meaning "sake to be drunk beneath the shadow of a willow," it was consumed chilled to dispel summer heat.

5. BLINDFOLD SOMEONE, MAKE THEM CUT OPEN A WATERMELON WITH A WOODEN SWORD, EAT THE WATERMELON

This is known as *suikawari*, a Japanese custom similar to Mexican piñata, and a popular summer pastime. Watermelon are in season in summer in Japan, and with a water content of 92 percent and a sugar content of six percent, it's bound to perk you up. And the entertainment provides a momentary distraction from the rivers of sweat pouring out of places from which you never knew you could sweat.

6. EAT THINGS PICKLED IN VINEGAR

Vinegar can help stimulate circulation and cool the body down, providing a sense of refreshment by stimulating your salivary glands, helping to replenish minerals and electrolytes lost through sweating. To this effect, eat vinegared dishes such as *sunomono* (cucumber salad), *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles), and vinegared noodle dipping sauces like *tsuyu*.





7. DRINK BEER, LOTS OF IT

A beer “drinking party” is the modern linchpin of shokibarai. It’s said that beer is in fact not cooling, because the alcohol content can dehydrate you and cause vasodilation, making your skin flushed. However, another argument maintains that as you have a good time getting boozy with friends, you’ll probably just forget about the heat altogether. Problem solved.



8. DRINK AMAZAKE

In what sounds like an unlikely candidate for a summer energy drink—thick, creamy, sweet, and sometimes mildly alcoholic—*amazake* (sweet sake) is a Japanese beverage made from rice and *koji* (fermentation culture) that is packed with vitamins, minerals, and glucoses.

Amazake has been drunk since the year 4 AD to combat the weariness of natsubate, as well as aid digestion, improve skin health, promote weight loss, boost the immune system, and even cure hangovers.

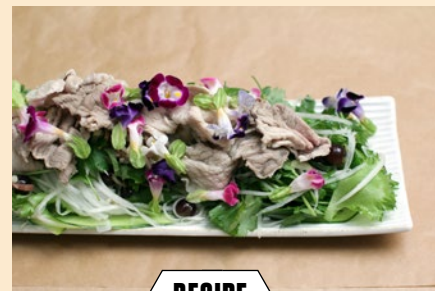


9. DRINK MUGICHA

Typically drunk cold in Japan, *mugicha* (roasted barley tea) is naturally caffeine-free, sugarless, and has a clean, nutty, coffee-like flavor. It contains antioxidants and replenishing minerals like calcium, iron, and vitamin B. It provides energy and improves digestion and circulation.

10. DO ALL OF THE ABOVE WHILE CAMPING

Less concrete and reflected heat, more trees and shade, places to swim, campfire cooking. Enough said.



RECIPE

GRAPE & SHISO REI SHABU WITH YUZUKOSHO DRESSING

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

INGREDIENTS

- Grape & Shiso Rei Shabu
- 60ml sake
- 60ml mirin
- 2 tsp salt
- ¼ onion, shaved or very finely sliced
- 1 tsp rice vinegar (optional)
- 400g shaved pork
- 150g mixed leaves, such as lettuce, *mitsuba*, or *mizuna*
- 100g daikon, julienned
- 2 Japanese cucumbers, shaved
- 100g small seedless red grapes
- 3-4 shiso leaves, finely sliced
- 1 myoga (or shallot), halved lengthways and finely sliced

SERVINGS
4

YUZUKOSHO DRESSING

- 2 tsp *yuzukosho* (or 2 tsp minced preserved lemon, or finely grated lemon or lime rind)
- 40ml rice wine vinegar
- 40ml neutral-flavored oil
- 2 tsp mirin
- 1 tsp sugar

PREPARATION

1. Combine 1 liter of water, sake, mirin, and salt in a large saucepan, and bring to a boil.
2. Combine onion in a small bowl covered with cold water mixed with the vinegar. Set aside for at least 10 min to remove its bite (you can use it raw if preferred), then drain and squeeze dry.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine greens, daikon, cucumber, grapes, shiso, and soaked onion.
4. Once the water has reached a boil, add pork and remove about 10-20 sec after. If it’s thin, it will take barely any time to cook. After, submerge in cold water.
5. Arrange the salad on a plate, top with pork, pour over dressing, and scatter with myoga.

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Beer Hall Day was established to celebrate the
opening of the first ever beer hall on Aug 4th, 1899.

Beer can vary according to location



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GROUNDINGS FOR PLEASURE

Three of Shimokitazawa's best coffee houses

BY JOAN BAILEY

Following in Japan's long tradition of *kissaten* (coffee houses), Shimokitazawa is home to more than a few excellent modern takes on this institution. An array of small, locally-owned shops serve up everything from lattes to Americanos to something which

Australians refer to as a "flat white," all paired with a wonderfully sweet little something on the side. *Metropolis* scoured the streets of this hipster hub to find some of the best coffee and treats to refresh, revitalize, and rejuvenate even the most tired of hipsters. Head on out to kick back, sip, and savor!



FRANKIE MELBOURNE ESPRESSO

Having open only a few months ago, Frankie already feels like a neighborhood institution. The cool black walls, natural wood tables, and shiny glass and chrome display case for scrumptious bits and bobs are distinctly contemporary but cozy. The coffee menu is all Melbourne, and the friendly, bilingual staff are happy to guide visitors through a maze of new vocabulary to caffeinated bliss. A small but excellent selection of Australian sweets and savory treats is available, although the latter isn't an option until around 11am. Be advised: the lemon slice with a bottom half somewhere between shortbread and a British flapjack is irresistible, while the Anzac cookies run a close second.

2-12-15 Kitazawa, Setagaya-ku. Open 10am–9pm (Closed Mon). ☞ Shimokitazawa. www.frankie.jp



DARWIN ROOM

This cozy hideaway, filled with an eclectic collection of books, art, and oddities, accompanied by good coffee and a small menu of sweets, is surely a place its namesake would adore. It's one of the few places where a life-sized stuffed zebra, a Charles Darwin finger puppet, and a caterpillar pin are perfectly normal. Solid wood tables run alongside windows framed by verdant fronds and blossoms of the plants that nearly envelop the building. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy a book or two with their beverage and tasty slice of cake or scrumptious cookie. This liberal arts café offers a variety of events throughout the year, ranging from a young rakugo performer to established illustrators and authors.

5-31-8 Daizawa, Setagaya-ku. Open 12pm–8pm, Sun–Thu; 12pm–9pm Fri & Sat. ☞ Shimokitazawa. <http://darwinroom.muse.weblife.me>



THE PLASTER'S CAFÉ

Opened a little over a year ago, The Plaster's Café is a five-story hive of funky goodness, not the least of which is perfectly brewed coffee. Visitors start on the first floor, dubbed "the Food Cart," where they have the option of treating themselves to organic coffee and ice cream, craft beer, or homemade curry. From there, beverage and snack of choice in hand, they can settle outside at a table or wander up to the rooftop gardens. In between are floors of shops, galleries, and artist studios that charm and entice.

Fair warning: the coffee is too delicious to let it go cold, but it will be easy to lose track of time.

2-19-5 Rainbow Soko, Setagaya-ku. Open daily, 11am–7pm (8pm in summer). ☞ Shimokitazawa. Tel: 03-5787-6882. <http://t-plaster.com>



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THE CITY

NIPPORI TEXTILE TOWN

Tokyo's DIY-clothing haven

BY TREVOR CAMPBELL

Whether you've gone DIY by choice or necessity, sewing your own swag is a great way to get what you want at a price you can stomach. Even if you're just a beginner, lots of easy projects can be completed in an afternoon with great results. Need new curtains? Make them yourself!

Fortunately, Tokyo isn't short on places to stock up your sewing kit. While a variety of stores are spread across the city, a veritable pin cushion of retailers can be found right on the Yamanote Line in Nippori Textile Town—also known as Nippori Fabric Town, Nippori Textile District, or Nippori Fabric Street. Identity crisis aside, this one-kilometer strip dates back to the Taisho Era (1912-1926), and is home to around 100 stores, offering everything from straight pins to fat squares.

Exiting at Nippori Station's East Exit, you'll immediately see signs leading you to your destination, located only a few minutes from the station itself. Nearly everything is situated along a single street, but some hidden gems can be found along neighboring streets. For a list of what's available, grab an official map of the area; they're free, and can be found by the cashiers at most shops.

Part of the fun is exploring the area for yourself, with good deals and rare finds scattered throughout. A lot of the smaller shops seem to have been



FURIKAKE

Your favorite rice topping is now your favorite textile store! As the name suggests, Furikake is full of “sprinkles”: beads, sequins, and metal bits and/or bobs. The top floor has an eclectic selection of fabrics, including a metallic mesh perfect for the *Game of Thrones* cosplayer on a budget.

5-34-1 Higashinippori, Arakawa-ku. Open daily, 9:30am-6pm. <http://ameblo.jp/furikake-nippori>.

NIPPORI SHOWROOM MACHINE SHOP

One of the largest sewing machine stores on the strip, the appliances on display here range from basic models that start at around ¥12,000, to high-end varieties going for ¥100,000 or more. As an added bonus, there are stacks of scrap fabric, so you can give a machine a test run before you take it home.

5-3-10 Higashi-Nippori, Arakawa-ku. Open Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm; Sun, 11am-6pm. <http://zakzak.tanmono.com/index2.html>.

TOMATO

If Textile Town was a *Monopoly* board, Tomato would be winning. Occupying multiple spots along both sides of the street, Tomato has separate storefronts for upholstery, high-end garments, sewing tools, and discounted goods. But the main attraction is Tomato Honkan. Spanning a mighty five stories, they're almost guaranteed to have whatever you're searching for, and at a decent price to boot. Fabric-wise, there's everything from official *Life* magazine prints and Lichtenstein to more traditional Japanese designs. There's even a dedicated floor for formal wear, with its own soundtrack: during my visit, I was treated to the darling child of Tokyo's music collection: smooth jazz. You'll want more than you can carry, but they've planned for that: each floor has its own set of rolling fabric bags that can be used to wheel your selections to the cutting table.

6-44-6 Higashi-Nippori, Arakawa-ku. Open daily, 10am-6pm. www.nippori-tomato.com.

around for ages, with knowledgeable staff who are happy to help you find what you're looking for. (You'll get a cooler response in the wholesale stores, unless you're planning to make a significant purchase.) Still, if you're looking for some more direction, *Metropolis* has a few recommended destinations to get you going.

YAMAYO

Only a block into Textile Town, this two-room corner shop is a good place to start. The front room has sewing patterns and basic supplies, as well as a limited selection of sewing machines, including models from the much-lauded Bernina brand. In the back, you'll find a small but diverse selection of fabrics starting at around ¥300 per meter.

5-348 Higashinippori, Arakawa-ku. Open daily, 10am-7pm. <http://yamayo-nippori.com>.





AUGUST NEWS

Climbing Mt. Fuji and want to post a selfie from the top? Internet service providers Wire & Wireless are now offering **free Wi-Fi at 49 spots around Mt. Fuji**, including all mountain huts and along several hiking routes. Users will be asked to register with their information or social media account, while Wire & Wireless' Travel Japan Wi-Fi app automatically connects your gadget to the Fuji network. The network will be accessible until September 10, giving hikers ample time to live-tweet their treks.

The **Tomodachi Honda Cultural Exchange Program** offers Japanese students from disaster-stricken areas in the Tohoku Region a chance to visit the United States for two weeks. The Honda Motors Co.-funded initiative allows visiting students to be immersed in American culture through music and interaction with locals. This year's Tomodachi program will bring students to Los Angeles, where they will homestay with a local family, visit U.S. corporations and schools, and participate in the Rose Parade. To apply or learn more, visit <http://usjapantomodachi.org>.

CI Japan, the Japan branch of the Conservative International non-profit devoted to environmental and wildlife protection, has launched its **Donate 4 Birds** project. The initiative asks Twitter users to donate their account to get the word out; or to collect donations from social media users. The proceeds go toward funding CI's efforts to protect several species of birds on the brink of extinction "due to human activities." To get involved, visit <http://donateforbirds.com/en/>

On July 15, **French nationals in Tokyo gathered to hold a vigil** outside the French ambassador Thierry Dana's residence, to pay their respects for the lives lost in last month's Bastille Day

attacks in Nice. The attacks, which were carried out by an assailant driving a truck into crowds on the French national day, resulted in the deaths of 84 people. A memorial service was also held on the same day at the French Embassy in Tokyo, which was attended by approximately 300 French expats.

A recent plenary session of the **U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural & Educational Interchange (CULCON)** announced new measures to ensure the alliance's 2013 goal to doubling two-way student exchanges between the two countries. Student exchange numbers have significantly dropped this century, notably among Japanese studying in the U.S.—Japan once being the biggest demographic of foreign exchange students in U.S. universities. U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy, who spoke from a podium at the stately Mitsubishi-Kaitokaku manor in Shinagawa, also announced a new initiative by the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) to implement U.S.-style internship programs within Japan-based U.S. companies for Japanese-U.S. exchange alumni. <http://culcon.jusfc.gov/>.



The Run for the Cure Foundation, a government-registered non-profit aiming to eradicate breast cancer through raising awareness and timely screenings, is holding a Casino Night fundraiser at the Ritz-Carlton Tokyo on September 2. The event will offer an evening of casino games, live entertainment, and food; and proceeds go toward raising funds for the Foundation's outreach programs. Feeling like giving back? Register by August 26 at <http://runfortheCure.org/en/casino-night/>.

Hands On Tokyo will be holding the **Minato Kids' Cafeteria Project** on August 31 in two sessions from 9:45am to 1pm and 12:45 to 5pm. Children are invited to come along for a fun-filled day of activities and exchange, where they can learn from each other while volunteers assist them in creating culinary masterpieces to eat and enjoy. Volunteers over the age of 16 and with basic Japanese language skills are still required for the afternoon session. Those interested can e-mail info@handsontokyo.org. www.handsontokyo.org/en.

Do you enjoy wine? Silly question; of course you do! **Tokyo Wine Events** holds regular wine-appreciation dinner/seminars at various restaurants across Tokyo. Held at the prestigious ARGO, this month's event (¥11,980-¥14,980), on August 27, pits two European wine-producing giants—Italy and France—against each other for a night of tasting, comparing, and savoring. Special guest Francesco Puglia, an Italian wine specialist, will take patrons through the various samples throughout the evening—hopefully without bias—to help gain a better understanding for the beloved drink. The seminar also includes a carefully-paired dinner, featuring Fried Cod with Cajun Spices, Steak, and A Trio of Pyramids for dessert. Connoisseurs of all levels welcome. www.tokyowineevents.com.



FEATURED MOVIE

TRUMBO

Fresh out of WWII and with a brand new Red Menace to worry about, fear-mongering right-wing American politicians decided that Hollywood was crawling with commies embedding secret messages in their films, and undertook the task of not letting them work if they didn't "name names."

One of the most visible and certainly vocal victims of this HUAC madness was Dalton

Trumbo, the writer of *Roman Holiday*, *Spartacus*, *Exodus*, and dozens of other classics (often uncredited, ghost-written). This irascible curmudgeon, who worked in his bathtub, defied this notorious blacklist and triumphed.

Jay Roach's ever-so-slightly hagiographic movie is of course driven by a spot-on, just-hammy-enough title performance by Bryan Cranston (*Breaking Bad*). But the supporting cast doesn't make a wrong turn. Helen Mirren gets to play the villain with a delicious performance as the bigoted gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, darling of the Hollywood Right. Also Alan Tudyk, Diane Lane, Michael Stuhlbarg,

and a surprisingly effective Louis C.K.

What amazed me was how a film about one of America's most shameful periods could be so uplifting and, thanks to John McNamara's knowledgeable, jovial screenplay, quite fun to watch, all while managing to avoid undercutting the seriousness of the issue.

It's a great story, well written and entertainingly told. It's also more than a little topical, given the fear tactics currently being employed by a certain orange-colored presidential candidate. Stick around for the closing credits. Japanese title: *Trumbo: Hollywood ni Mottomo Kirawareta Otoko*. (124 min)



AMY

Footage of a teenage Amy Winehouse has her saying, "I don't think I want to be famous ... I couldn't handle it. I'd go

mad." This Oscar-winning documentary on the rapid rise and very public fall of the late jazz singer is neither opportunistic nor analytical. Could her life have gone another way? Director Asif Kapadia leaves that up to you. At times it plays like a horror movie, not unlike watching a healthy Hobbit morph into Gollum. High point: a duet with 89-year-old Tony Bennett, her longtime idol. Overall, a strangely uplifting, poignant tribute to a rare talent just getting started. Amy sings to you. (128 min)



FINDING DORY

Backstory of the daffy, memory-impaired tang fish in *Finding Nemo* has her as a shamelessly adorable guppy forget-

ting her way back to her family and now, years later, going to look for them. It's sporadically clever, and sure to divert (when not emotionally scarring) little kids. But this second-tier Pixar effort seems tacked together by focus groups, and it lacks the momentum, the empathy, and the intimacy that made the first film so satisfying. Feels a little canned. Good points: Ellen DeGeneres is lovable as Dory, and the film treats the forgetful fish's affliction seriously rather than for laughs. (95 min)



THE SHALLOWS

While surfing alone off a secluded beach, Blake Lively is attacked by a computer-generated Great White. She makes

it to a rock, then a buoy, but she's still a maddening 100 meters from safety. Lively gets to show off her range in this beauty-vs.-beastie bit of chum (not to mention a bit of T&A). There's not a lot new in this busy, athletic millennial B-movie from Jaime Collet-Serra (*Run All Night*, *Orphan*, *House of Wax*), but it's simple and efficient, and avoids being really stupid. Except for the WTF resolution. Not in the same pool as *Jaws*, but a diverting night at the movies for fans of the genre. Japanese title: *Lost Vacation*. (86 min)



INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Well, the nasty thingies are back, lured here by Fox to make a sequel (or two) to the surprise 1996

Will Smith crowd-pleaser. If all you want is ludicrous levels of destruction (oddly unconnected to the alleged plot), this CGI blivet is for you. Roland Emmerich doesn't get "less is more." The mother ship's as big as the friggin' Atlantic, the havoc is wholesale, the script stinks, and the acting's rotten. (WTF is Charlotte Gainsbourg doing in this twaddle?) Dizzying? Yes. Thrilling? No. The first film was silly, but audacious and fun. This is a Big Dumb Bore. Think those lame *Star Wars* prequels. (124 min)



SING STREET

This is John Carney's semi-autobiographical story of a 15-year-old lad in 1985 Dublin getting a scruffy band together

and finding his first love. Although I thoroughly enjoyed Carney's *Once* and *Begin Again*, this third time, and I'm in a minority here, was not the charm for me. Admittedly toe-tapping in spots, I found it a tad twee, falsely quaint, and overly adorable; in short, trying too hard to be *The Commitments* (an all-time favorite). A slick crowd-pleaser where there used to be grit. Not necessarily an improvement on the writer/director's work. Time to move on to something fresher. Japanese title: *Sing Street: Mirai e no Uta*. (105 min)



PELÉ: BIRTH OF A LEGEND

The self-explanatory biopic takes up the life of the legend from the favelas of São Paulo to

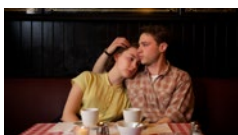
his leading Brazil to its first World Cup in 1958, trouncing arrogant host country Sweden. He was 17. Yes, it's hagiography, commissioned by the man himself (watch for the walk-on), but it's inspiring hagiography. As far as it goes. Ironically, considering their famously game-changing subject, directors Jeff and Michael Zimbalist stick to the playbook, and despite some dynamic cinematography, it slogs in places. Pelé is a Brazilian national treasure and Athlete of the Century. He deserves a better tribute. Japanese title: *Pelé: Densetsu no Tanjo*. (107 min)



THE CONJURING 2

Equally well-made and -acted (by Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson) sequel to the above-average 2013 chiller

features a smart script, and the different location and story (a London poltergeist) keeps it from feeling like a retread. Director James Wan gets it right, providing plentiful jolts as well as a pervading feeling of dread, always with a sense of his audience. Could have done without the (inevitable) Christian subtext (born-again this time), which comes off as preachy compared to, of course, *The Exorcist*. In short, this sequel does what a sequel should do: make you want another. Expect one. Japanese title: *Shiryokan: Enfield Jiken*. (134 min)



BROOKLYN

A young Irish immigrant in 1952 finds both her footing and romance in the title NYC borough. But when her sister's death

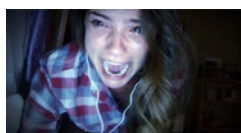
mandates a visit to Ireland, she faces a succession of charming attempts to lure her into staying. The story is simple and universally familiar, about choice, love, and what we call home. But still waters run deep. It's amazing how it can walk the cusp of melodrama, yet so adroitly avoid sentimentality. See it mainly for Saoirse Ronan (*Atonement*), who makes her character someone we care what happens to. Sweetly sincere and robustly romantic, this is the kind of film they used to make. (111 min)



DOPE

Malcolm (Shameik Moore, in a breakout role) is a single-parent, straight-A high school student in the south central 'hood who

aspires to Harvard. He digs '90s hip-hop and Game of Thrones. Yes, Malcolm and fellow goofballs Diggy and Jib are geeks. When they come across several bricks of MDMA, they opt to sell it themselves, on line using Bitcoin. What could go wrong? Way more than just a black *Ferris Bueller*, this indie is an appealing, unpredictable and intelligent crowd-pleaser that's rambunctious but insightful, and loaded with heart. With a thought-provoking political punch. (103 min)



UNFRIENDED

(AKA *Cybernatural*.) The tired found-footage genre gets a potent reset with this modest story about a group of

generally unlikable millennials who start getting messages from someone using the Facebook account of a dead classmate who was cyber-bullied into suicide. The action takes place entirely on a computer screen, but director Levan Gabriadze turns this limitation into an oh-so-relatable benefit. There's some sly humor as well, and the foreshadowing's hilarious. This may be the rare movie that would be better viewed on the small screen. Even better (a-heh!), watch it on your computer. I hit "Like." (83 min)



THE LEGEND OF TARZAN

Lord Greystoke (a blandly Byronic Alexander Skarsgård), now resettled in England, is called

back to the Congo in the 1880s to deal with Belgium's rapacious colonization. This ungainly, glum superhero treatment (the Vineslinger?) is at least better than 1984's *Greystoke*, but that's not saying much. Its dazzling but colossally irrelevant action set pieces give the 3-D something to do and serve to keep you awake, but sabotage whatever momentum the meager, anachronistic storyline has managed to generate. Good points: Christophe Waltz as yet another smarmy villain, and Margo Robbie as Jane. Japanese title: *Tarzan Reborn*. (135 min)



THE PROGRAM

Cyclist Lance Armstrong overcame testicular cancer, started a global children's cancer foundation, and won the

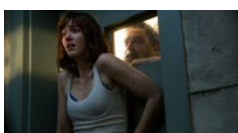
Tour de France seven times. A true hero. Until he wasn't. But you know this, and the film offers little new information. But it raises questions: What kind of man values winning so much that it's worth living such a dark lie? I wish it had gone deeper. But see it for Ben Foster's tour de force performance. Armstrong's only dream was to win the Tour. He's showed little remorse at being caught. I wanted to know about the forces that produced such an accomplished, hollow fake. Japanese title: *Giwaku no Champion*. (103 min)



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Disney repackaging squared. Cubed. Only today's Mouse House could throw so much

money, raw talent, and cinematic skill into a project and end up with such a transparent and banal merchandizing mashup. There's little plot and less substance in this financially mandated, soulless and joyless sequel, and it's almost painful to watch the great cast dumb itself down to the dramatically inert script. But there is a lot of movement and bright colors, so it might entertain very small kids. That is if you want those kids to develop incredibly bland entertainment standards. There's no wonder in this Wonderland. Japanese title: *Alice in Wonderland: Jikan no Tabi* (113 min)



10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

An apparently kidnapped woman wakes up in an underground shelter with an obviously loony survivalist telling

her he's saved her life. Sure, she says, and plots her escape. Conspiracy? Abduction? Terrorism? Alien Invasion? You won't know from one scene to the next. Mary Elizabeth Winstead is spot on here, smart and strong yet vulnerable. But the movie revolves around John Goodman, whose rare ability to do both loveable and deeply menacing will have you squirming. It all works because the dread is psychological, not gimmicky. It also pokes a little fun at itself and the horror genre as a whole. (105 min)



LEGEND

Tom Hardy again demonstrates—twice—why he's one of the most versatile actors working today. Here he plays the twin

Kray brothers, mobsters who terrorized London in the '50s and '60s. Despite being identical twins, the suave and brooding Reggie and the dangerously unhinged Ronnie couldn't have been more emotionally and intellectually different. Pity Brian Helgeland's lurching movie about them comes off so tonally incoherent and disappointingly shallow. No clue whatsoever as to what made these psychopaths tick. But still worth catching for Hardy's performance(s). Japanese title: *Legend: Kyoki no Bigaku* (132 min)

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President, Dale Carnegie Training Japan

2
SESSION

3^{PM} ~ 4^{PM}

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Dr. Greg Story

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CINEMATIC UNDERGROUND
PAST MASTERS
BY KEVIN MCGUE

When Russian-born Hollywood actor Anton Yelchin died in a freak car accident in June, he left behind a filmography that ranges from indie hits to sci-fi blockbusters. Shin-Bungeiza in Ikebukuro (3F, 1-43-5 Higashi-Ikebukuro Toshima-ku; www.shin-bungeiza.com) pays tribute to the mourned star with an all-night screening of some of his best work, kicking off at 10:30pm on August 13. The lineup includes **Rudderless** (pictured), in which Yelchin employed his musical skills to play a young guitarist who helps a grieving father overcome the

loss of his son.

The world lost one of its greatest musicians when David Bowie passed away in January. But the music icon also kept busy as an actor, taking cameos, supporting roles and occasional leads. One of the best is in Nicolas Roeg's 1976 sci-fi parable **The Man Who Fell to Earth**. Bowie plays an alien who comes to earth to steal its water, and becomes wealthy from inventions based on his planet's advanced technology. But the plot takes the back seat to surrealistic imagery. On from

August 27 at Human Trust Cinema Yurakucho (2-7-1 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku; www.ht-cinema.com)

Shibuya arthouse Cinema Vera (1-5 Maruyamacho, Shibuya-ku; www.cinemavera.com) continues its presentation of some of the greatest films ever made with the program Cinema Canon vol. 15, starting July 30 and running through late August. The films include **Spellbound** (1945) which saw Alfred Hitchcock team up with Salvador Dali to create surreal imagery, the atmospheric film noir **The Big Combo** (1955) and Orson Welles' adaptation of **Othello** (1952). All films screen as double features for ¥1,400.

French New Wave director Jacques Rivette, who died in January at the age of 87, is honored with screenings at Waseda Shochiku (1-5-16 Takadanobaba, Shinjuku-ku; www.wasedashochiku.co.jp), August 6-12. **The Gang of Four** (1988; pictured) looks into the lives of four women studying together at a drama school, **The Nun** (1966) is about a girl in the 18th century forced to take the vow against her will and **The Beautiful Troublemaker** (1991) stars Jane Birkin as an artist's muse.



© 1988 Pierre Grise Productions

EIGA
**MORIYAMACHU
DRIVING SCHOOL**
BY ROB SCHWARTZ

Here's another wacky buddy comedy that turns serious and back into a wacky buddy comedy. It kind of goes without saying that this farce is adapted from a manga, in this case a best seller from the Gekkan Spiritsu publication. Conceived and drawn by Keigo Shinzo when he was only 23, the story revolves around high school classmates (though not friends) Kiyotaka (Shuhei Nomura) and Todoroki (Kento Kaku). It starts with happy-go-lucky Kiyotaka vowing to get his drivers license to impress hottie Matsuda (Yukino Kishii). Shortly thereafter he's biking on a dark street and gets hit by yakuza-in-training Todoroki. It turns out the platinum blonde toughie Todoroki doesn't have a license (despite driving for a yakuza boss) and the two youths end up at the same unsanctioned driving school in the outback. Todoroki is the picture of cool detachment while Kiyotaka wears his heart on his



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sleeve, but, hey, this is a buddy pic, so of course they grow close. The camp's female instructor Saki (Kumiko Aso) offers the boys a chance for romance, though this is only a subplot. Instead, Kiyotaka matures while Todoroki may grow a con-

science, and naturally they have many madcap adventures. In turns silly and earnest, this coming of age comedy does invert some of the shopworn themes of the genre. Worth a look. (Japanese title: *Moriyama Chukyoshujo* ; 103 min.)



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MIDSUMMER DESIGN FESTA GAKUTEN

BY C.B.LIDDELL

In all the years I've covered art in Japan, the event I enjoy visiting most is Design Festa. This vast festival of creative outpouring—most of it amateur, student, or semi-pro—is typically held at the vast and architecturally stunning Tokyo Big Site centre in the Odaiba area, across the Rainbow Bridge.

It gives me the opportunity to ride in on the Yurikamome elevated transit system, with magnificent views of the Bay Area, and later take a walk on Tokyo's only beach. But this is also the one art event where I'm most likely to part with my money, and bring something home for my burgeoning art collection.

As a collector, it's a bit like gambling with pennies. You'll never get rich this way by buying some future world-recognized art genius—although who knows? But with the prices so low and something for every taste, you're at least pretty sure to come home feeling you've got the best end of the bargain. I'm still very fond of all the purchases I've made here over the years, so this is great for art collectors, especially those just starting a collection, or people merely interested in brightening—or weirding—up their home a bit.

But even if you don't buy anything besides a few postcards, the real reason to visit the event is the sheer spectacle of thousands of creative people expressing themselves in various and often outlandish ways. Some just turn up to sell their wares, but others dress for the occasion, donning exotic and sometimes very sexy costumes, while others paint “live.” There are also performance areas for dancing and rock music—and of course, more cosplay than you can shake a furry stick at.

The great thing, though, is meeting the people. It's surprising how friendly some of them can get when there's a prospect that you might validate their existence by buying something they've put their heart and creative soul into.

Midsummer Design Festa Gakuten is a relatively new addition to the usual roster of Design Festas, which are held in the spring and autumn, and, as the name suggests, it has a special focus on students—although that



category is interpreted very loosely in typical open-ended Design Festa style:

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In life we never stop learning, and visiting a Design Festa is bound to surprise you and teach you something new, so for a truly memorable artistic experience, get down to Tokyo Big Site at the end of August. I know I will.

Midsummer Design Festa. Aug 27-28. Tokyo Big Sight. Nearest stn: Kokusai-tenjijo-seimon.



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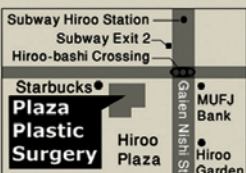
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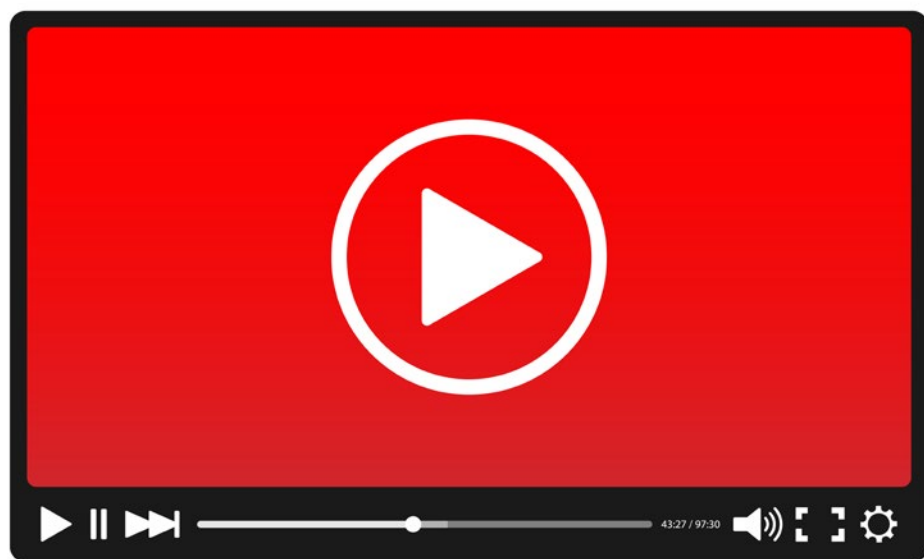
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FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE

The Top Five YouTube channels about Japan

BY JONATHAN BETHUNE

YouTube is chock-full of great channels about Japan, and the list below describes some of the best. It is really just a starting point and is by no means a definitive or exhaustive list, so don't be afraid to explore the recommended channels that pop up on each of these channels' pages.

5. ABROAD IN JAPAN

I stumbled across this channel while looking for information on the McDonald's "chocofries" campaign. What I found was a pretty spot-on review from a delightfully irreverent British chap named Chris Broad. His channel, Abroad in Japan—see what he did there with the name?—is everything you want from a gaijin video blogger from England. Japanese language-learning advice? Check. Dry sense of humor? Check. Travel tips and interesting excursions? Check. Lessons on how to get dates? Check. Fairly jaded and snarky yet weirdly charming personality? Check. Broad manages to be helpful, funny, and dare I say somewhat lovable, all at once.

www.youtube.com/user/cmbroad44



4. ONLY IN JAPAN

Only in Japan is one of the most varied and fun channels you will find about Japan on YouTube. Covering many facets of the culture, you'll find videos on everything from Kyoto street food to volcanic sand baths.

The channel is the work of John Daub, an NHK reporter. True to NHK form, you can expect the videos to be well-produced, professionally edited, and a little corny in an endearing way. (The gong sound effect during the intro might be a little on the nose.) It's a great channel to watch before coming to Japan to get ideas on interesting things to see and do. It's also great for gaijin in Japan for the long haul, as you're bound to learn something new. Definitely worth your time.

www.youtube.com/user/ONLYinJAPANWAORYU

3. HIKAKINTV

Hikakin is one of Japan's most popular YouTubers. He, along with his pal Seikin, has a few different channels, including one focused on gaming. HikakinTV is a channel focused on his day-to-day experiences, as well as random product reviews.

The channel is all in Japanese with no English subtitles, unless you want to try YouTube's auto-translated subtitles, which will take you on a surreal linguistic journey beyond your wildest dreams. So, that may be a deal-breaker for a lot of folks. Still, it's worth checking out to get a sense of Japanese internet culture and to enjoy some silly humor. His gaming channel also features some priceless moments of Minecraft, if you're into that sort of thing.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCZf__ehICEB-Pop-_sldpBUQ

2. NHK NEWS

The NHK YouTube channel is a fantastic resource. An unassuming channel with not many views, NHK YouTube has literally thousands of short news videos that can keep you up-to-date if you're out of the country or don't have a TV. It's updated very frequently, and is easy to watch on a smartphone or tablet when you're on the go. Personally, I found the channel to be a great language-learning tool, as NHK is really good about their Japanese subtitles.

www.youtube.com/channel/UC3yyelqRth-lxxGg50tdsavA



1. THAT JAPANESE MAN YUTA

Yuta is a very cool bilingual Japanese guy who's been doing fantastic street interviews for a few years now. He talks to regular Japanese folks, in Japanese, and gets their genuine opinions on all sorts of issues. His videos cover everything from dating to race to Japanese customs.

Yuta did a great video recently about "white-washing," where he asked Japanese people what they thought about Scarlett Johansson playing Motoko in the forthcoming Hollywood adaptation of Ghost in the Shell. (Definitely a must-watch for non-Japanese people who were offended by the casting of a non-Japanese person for this role.) Yuta also does some fun social experiment videos, and even offers free Japanese lessons that you can get by e-mail. Yuta is a bro.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCn7LyB-vG5LEBXK9I4W5dGdA

Check out our full Top 10 list of Japan-centric YouTube channels on www.metropolisjapan.com.

HIROMI

Piano muse heads up
Tokyo Jazz 2016

BY DAN GRUNEBAUM



WHEN MUSIC
FOR FREE
HAPPENS OUT
OF GREED,
THAT'S WHEN IT
HURTS."

Recently, talk in the jazz world has been of a hopeful renaissance. Interest is up, a new generation is taking its place, and the war between jazz classicists and the avant-garde appears to have drawn to a truce. And if ever there were to be a face for the new, globalized vision of jazz, pint-sized Japanese piano virtuoso Hiromi would be a prime candidate.

For the Hamamatsu native, it's perfectly natural for a century-old African-American music form to take up residence in the Far East.

"I always get asked why jazz is so big in Japan," she says from Naples, Italy, where she's on tour, a hint of frustration showing through the line. "I think it's important everywhere. It's a form of music that can reach so many different kinds of people."

What is it about jazz that allows it to transcend borders? "Maybe it's the improvisational part," Hiromi muses. "Even the people who are playing don't know what will happen on a given day. And most listeners enjoy the mystery tour. No one knows where it will end."

A child prodigy who attended the renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston, Hiromi signed her first record deal in 2003—even before graduating. Her explosive virtuosity and ability to meld tradition with modernity—along with some creative hairstyles—have made her

a pillar of the supper club and festival circuit.

"I never felt stage fright in my life," Hiromi laughs. "I was always excited and loved performing. Even in my house, I practiced to perform and composed to perform. When I was little, I used to carry a flashlight to my piano room and would turn off all the lights so it looked like a concert hall. And I would call my mom and bow, and make a speech: 'No flash photography, no video recording of any kind.'"

Hiromi is a banshee at the piano, commanding the respect of musicians twice her age—and weight. Her upcoming set at the flashy Tokyo Jazz Festival will again show off her trio project with two veterans, bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Simon Phillips. The unit has just released its fourth album, *Spark*.

"I wanted to write something about the idea that everything starts with a single spark, and the journey begins from there," Hiromi explains. "The other songs evolved in relation to the title track. You get into a trance, and feel like you want to be taken away to a wonderland. Each song called up the next."

Perhaps it's her preternatural ability to channel her muse with such ease that's made Hiromi a hit worldwide. "I always feel like each show is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," she observes. "Even if I play the same songs, it can differ like

night and day. I really enjoy the ride. It's something I can't control and I like to go with the flow. It's like life. You don't know what you'll encounter every day. You always have to improvise. It's an amazing experience to spend a precious hour or two together. I feel like I'm the captain of a boat and I have to give my passengers a great musical adventure."

While Hiromi is serene about the bond she forms with her live audience, she's more circumspect about the gulf that streaming has opened up between performers and musicians. "Streaming is a great discovery method, but when music for free happens out of greed, that's when it hurts," she says. "All these years music was only supported by respect from musicians and audience for each other. When respect is ruined, that's the end of the music business."

One place where respect for music seems to remain is Hiromi's home country. "Musicians love coming to Japan. They all say Japan has the best hospitality," she notes in a comment that also points to a cause for jazz's popularity here. "That may also be why the greatest musicians want to come to Japan. And then they inspire the audience, and that helps to expand the fanbase for jazz in a virtuous circle."

Tokyo Jazz takes place Sep 2-4. www.tokyo-jazz.com

ALBUM REVIEW



RADIOHEAD

A MOON SHAPED POOL

BY THOMAS BEECHER

A lot of attention over Radiohead's newly-released ninth studio album has turned towards Thom Yorke's recent divorce from his partner of 23 years. And indeed, *A Moon Shaped Pool* possess all of the usual Radiohead melancholic trimming that we've come to love and expect. But a break up album it is not—not entirely, at least—with a complex range of new and refined sounds that will hit home for any fan of the group.

Much of the album brings to life material that's been sitting in the band's arsenal for years. The opening track, "Burn the Witch," has been on the backburner since *Kid A* days. And although Yorke's lyrics trod on familiar territory—"this is a low-flying panic attack"—the production, elevated by a rhythmic and atmospheric staccato-arpeggio orchestral string section, is pure 2016 Radiohead. Much praise goes to the group's guitarist Jonny Greenwood, whose side work as a film composer—including acclaimed scores for Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*, *The Master*, and *Inherent Vice*—is a visible influence on the album.

Yorke's extracurricular activities are also present on the album. "Identikit," the album's manifest nod to the front man's divorce ("Now I see you messin' me around, I don't want to know ... Broken hearts make it rain") opens with the same glitchy-electronic, slow rhythm that Yorke played around with on his solo works. "Ful Stop" is another moment of electronic ingenuity. A raunchy, meandering intro—which will make you feel as though you've stepped into a German bunker-turned-nightclub—is masterfully replaced by a harmoniousness instrumental revolt, something only a band of Radiohead's caliber could achieve so seamlessly.

While slightly more upbeat than recent works, Yorke has very much stuck to his guns in the way of lyrics. "The Numbers," which was originally titled "Silent Spring," brings climate changes to the front, a prominent topic in Yorke's lyrical catalog. An eclectic cacophony of pianos and sundry noises introduce the song like a circus show setting up for a night's performance before Yorke forewarns, "The future is inside of us / it's not somewhere else."

But the boys certainly have come of age by this point. The final track, "True Love Waits," another song that has been sitting around for years, is nonetheless quintessential Radiohead 2016. "Don't leave, don't leave," Yorke poignantly croons alongside an austere piano melody, leaving fans with a necessary boost of optimism. Don't worry Thom, we won't.



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KAWADOKO

Beat the heat—Japanese style

BY TAMATHA ROMAN



Summer can be a hellish time to travel around Japan. You can duck into every air-conditioned establishment you approach, blow your paycheck on a new Cool Biz wardrobe, or even brave the crowds at hormone-driven beaches like Zushi. But there's a much classier way to bear the heat, and sunscreen is not required. *Kawadoko*, roughly meaning "place at the river," is a dining concept which involves eating next to or atop water in order to feel the breeze it supplies. Oftentimes, a series of tiered waterfalls helps this along, providing a scenic and incredibly relaxing way to dine alfresco.

Like many elements of Japanese history, kawadoko established its roots during the Edo Period. Back then, Kyotoans would flock in droves to cold mountain rivers to escape the summer heat with the cool rush of the water providing some comfort from the relentless humidity. There, tatami rooms were built on top of rivers for patrons to feast on an assortment of *kaiseki ryori* (traditional Japanese food). This experience was—and still is—a privilege, so many chose to dress up for the occasion, wearing kimono or *yukata* (summer kimono, made from cotton).

These days, kawadoko continues to reign as a seasonal favorite. And since Kyoto is the original home of kawadoko, the best places to enjoy it reside in or near the city. Visitors with little time on their agendas can dine next to the ever present Kamo River, running through the heart of Kyoto. However, as lovely as the views are, the somewhat pricey restaurants are still a fair distance from the actual river. For the real deal—as in properly hovering above the water—serious devotees head to Kibune, a small mountain town about an hour's train ride north of Kyoto.



experiences require a reservation, many of the restaurants at Kibune beckon unprepared patrons for a simpler, cheaper meal. With no intention of even doing kawadoko, I was seated at noon on a beautiful Sunday—prime time for

Kibune is a destination in itself, even without the added pleasure of kawadoko. It's a haven for *koiyo*-seekers (fall leaf viewing) who fall over themselves in order to ride the cute two-car train into Kibune, leading passengers through a tunnel of illuminated leaves. Mix in a love-themed shrine, coffee shops, and evening and fireflies, it's no wonder that this forested retreat sets a perfect stage for kawadoko along its Kibune river. From the bus stop, restaurant after restaurant lines the narrow street leading up to the shrine. You can glimpse some of the restaurants from street level, but most have covered up viewing points with signs warning not to take photos. Case in point: if you want to see kawadoko, you have to pay for the pleasure! But pick wisely—check out their menus and prices before being coerced.

Though most sought-after kawadoko

tourists. My table sat about a meter above the water, so close I could dangle my feet in the frigid water. Surrounding the "restaurant" was tatami matting, separating me from the other kawadoko establishments and shielding customers from the sun above. Slivers of sunlight poked through, though, creating sparkles of dazzling light on the river. The water itself was quietly moving downstream, a dull background noise that was so incredibly soothing it was hard not to just lie down on the tatami and take a post-meal siesta.

The food course was about ¥3,000, presented in a stacked ornate bento box. For the price, it was quite satisfying, comprising *yuba* (tofu skin, the area's speciality), *ochazuke* (green tea poured over flavored rice), and local vegetables and pickles. River fish were skewered and fried nearby. Out of everything, the sashimi was the only disappointment, obviously being of lower quality ... but that's to be expected from the price. Honestly, I would've been content with a slice of bread, as the scenery was so distracting. Though some people chose to spend their entire afternoon by the river, Kibune has its other treasures. Where else can you receive your *omikuji* (fortune) by placing a piece of paper in water and watching it magically appear?

Kawadoko is a seasonal affair, but definitely one to put on your Kyoto itinerary. Dining on water may seem like a simple concept, but somehow Japan makes the simple all the more special.





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
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
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BDC PILATES

Broadway Dance Center, a 30-year veteran in training professional dancers, held the grand opening of BDC Pilates in Omotesando/Minami-Aoyama in late April. It is the first studio in Japan to focus on group reformer classes, and with a limit of six people per class, participants receive the full attention of the instructor. English-speaking instructors available. Private sessions also offered. For a limited time, BDC is waiving its ¥30,000 membership fee. Trial lesson ¥2,000. Located a 30-second walk from Omotesando Station. **5F, 5-6-24 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo. E-mail: info@bdcpilates.com. (English OK.) <http://bdcpilates.com>** ☎ Omotesando



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Alexandre started as a hairstylist and color specialist for blondes and brunettes in Paris 25 years ago. He moved to New York, and worked in Manhattan for more than 10 years at an upscale hair salon. For many years, he worked in the fashion industry for movies and TV (*VH1: Behind the Music*, *CBS News*, etc.), fashion shows (Lanvin, Nautica, etc.) and photography (*Vanity Fair*, *Teen People*, etc.), moving between Paris and New York, and now, Tokyo. He also specializes in make-up and body painting, and can provide make-up workshops for small groups at private homes. Alexandre understands that sometimes, people are unable to visit salons for cuts and styling, and so he is happy to make house-calls. By appointment only at home or at Lizero in Omotesando. **Tel: 090-3520-6262. www.bba-japan.com**



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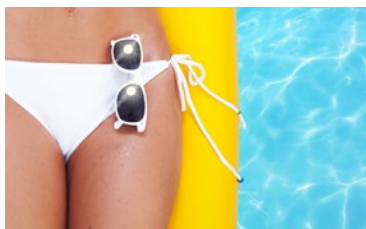
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THE STICKS
BY NICK ALSTON



HOROSCOPE
BY CATHRYN MOE

♥ Love ♣ Money ♠ Luck

ARIES
Mar 21-Apr 20 ♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠

August is a month to celebrate. Everything that has held sway is about to be turned on its head. For Aries, that's a reason to breathe deeply. The first few weeks may not seem like it, because the powers that be are still kicking up a lot of mirages. But with the influx of Mercury, the Moon, Jupiter, Venus, and the Sun, by the fourth week your work and health receive a welcome do-over.

TAURUS
Apr 21-May 21 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠

Finally, you can see the money ahead. A cloud has lifted, blown through by the breeze. Ceres is in the early degrees of Taurus, which means you can feel it: finances are on their way in. It's just the beginning, so there's more to come; no worries now. Romantic options grow throughout August. The fourth week, the brightest and strongest backup arrives. Make your move.

GEMINI
May 22-Jun 21 ♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

Does it seem like things are going backward? There's a bit of uneasiness going on. Much can be found unexpectedly—under the bedclothes, behind the cupboard, around the sofa. Energy focused at home is the order of the day. On vacation? You may have to do a bit of summer clearing to create that cozy feel. Don't believe everything you hear about career; it's still in flux!

CANCER
Jun 22-Jul 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

You can do it! Breathe easier for finances you accrue in August. There's a light shining on your income the first three weeks of the month. Details are crucial as conversations reverberate more than usual. You could find your secret treasure, or true love, so retracing your mental steps is worth the effort. The fourth week puts you in the spotlight. Surprise! You like it!

LEO
Jul 24-Aug 23 ♥♥♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

Clarity leads the way as you have your day in the sun. August begins with tiny details that can make a big difference. No whispered thought running through your mind is too small to explore. Every idea blends to make up the tapestry of your life. It's your "happy birthday" zone until the fourth week. Then the Sun warms up your finances in a most delightful way!

VIRGO
Aug 24-Sep 23 ♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

If you've been keeping your money stretched to the max, August will gift you. The beginning of the month brings you strength and good fortune, with a bit of leeway to stop for a conversation that could make your day. The pull-and-drag that has made goals elusive loses its grip as Venus, the Sun, Jupiter, and Mercury in Virgo wish you a very happy birthday later this month!

LIBRA
Sep 24-Oct 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

If you think you might get bogged down by details that derail you, take a deep breath and refresh your thinking. Those very tiny bits of information will save you a lot of time and energy in August. There's no way of getting away from the focus of Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, and the Sun in your solar 12th house. But any shadows they create means there's light shining behind them.

SCORPIO
Oct 24-Nov 22 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

This is less a touch-and-go month than you may think. The heavy hitters are moving into position to straighten things out. The nefarious actions and just plain bald-faced fabrications thrown in your direction are dissolving, with little chance of them rising again. Enjoy romance and a creative streak that could come from a group connection this August.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov 23-Dec 22 ♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

Love is an energy that has a way of showing up when you least expect it. Everyone says so. It's also the case when you can't help your heart from overflowing; you have to express it. Not all love is romance—it can be the love of a family member, a shared memory, or even the view of a sunset helping your spirit to soar. In August, you can start a new career, or augment the one you have.

CAPRICORN
Dec 23-Jan 20 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

Does it seem like everyone needs your help, while there's not much in it for you? August begins with an opposition of planets between your communication sector and long-distance travel. Luckily this resolves itself, as these celestial types push for your freedom. At the same time, they help spring you to a realm of energetic inheritance. Enough to enjoy the "gifts" along the way!

AQUARIUS
Jan 21-Feb 19 ♥♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

The continued chase of the Sun to Venus can mean a beautiful August seeks you out. Whatever you may feel you've left behind, there is a sense of inheritance on one level or another. It becomes clear that what you have put in, you are in the process of receiving. Pure love always translates to comfort in some way, whether it's material, intellectual, or a restoration of the soul.

PISCES
Feb 20-Mar 20 ♥♥ ♣♣ ♠♠♠

Where there is focus, there is grace—if you're a Pisces, that is! You have a way of settling things into their proper place. A spiritual awakening is available in August. The powerful stellium of Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, and then the Sun moving into your solar seventh house brings "partnership" into perspective. Finally, you have a foundation you can sink your feelings into.

Illustration by Christi Rochin



OUT OF THE BUBBLE

Finding an Identity in International Schools

BY MEG ITO



Growing up in an international school and then moving to a non-international community is a quick wake-up call. You learn you've grown up in a bubble that's so easy to be enclosed within. Having gone to an international school in Japan, I can tell you first hand: it's an easy place to be.

The hard part was when I started college, where, for the first time, I was treated as an outsider and lost my way home. Questions about Japan were eagerly asked, due to my status as a foreigner ... I mean, I was from Japan, the mystical land of futuristic robots and busty anime characters, which meant I definitely wasn't American. I was prepared for this feeling of displacement, but I didn't expect to be questioning the foundation of my identity.

I couldn't answer very many questions about Japanese culture. I had pride in growing up

Japanese, but I found myself unable to articulate specifics about the place I called home. The truth hits me harder than I'd like to admit: I don't actually know Japanese culture.

I soon discovered I didn't know American culture either. I thought I was in on all the jokes, but my first few months abroad were jarring. I couldn't pinpoint what was so off-kilter until I returned to Tokyo during winter break, and was asked whether I experienced culture shock; the answer was a surprising "yes." It was one of those lightbulb moments, as I realized that this was because my cultural identity wasn't specifically American or Japanese. The culture that defined me was one that resulted from living in an international school bubble.



STEPPING OUT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL BUBBLE WAS UNCOMFORTABLE. I STILL STRUGGLE TO NAVIGATE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS CULTURES THAT SHAPED ME, TO FIND THE BALANCE OF MY OWN CULTURAL IDENTITY.

There's something distinct about international school culture. It might be the fact that everyone is used to moving around, and people are accustomed to losing one another. Kindergarten playmates aren't the adults standing next to you at graduation. People are good at goodbyes, but people are also great at hellos.

Not surprisingly, international school culture wasn't something I could repackage into my non-international school life. The language, the humor, the relationship dynamics—all hybrids of both Japanese and American culture—was difficult to navigate through with students of non-international schools.

On the other hand, international school culture is also capable of transcending borders. You can meet someone from an international school in another country and get along with them instantly, as if you've known them all your life. The first friends I made at college were students who attended international schools, and many of my high school classmates share the same experience.

So what's not to love about the international school bubble? You're surrounded by people who share similar experiences, educational ideals, and the ambition to become a global citizen. (These words are always somewhere in an international school's mission statement.)

But this in itself is the problem. You grow up unaware of the people and place around you—one you might even call home. I'm Japanese and grew up in Tokyo all my life ... but in an international school, and this prevents me from truly connecting with Japanese people. In the bubble, you're never forced to question the structure that surrounds you or your own actions. Being forced to step outside allows you to come back with a new perspective of the world. One that's inclusive of different groups, and sheds light on the kind of privilege you've experienced.

Stepping out of the international school bubble was uncomfortable. I still struggle to navigate between the various cultures that shaped me, to find the balance of my own cultural identity. While I now recognize that international school culture exists, I could never cut away the Japanese and American cultures that influenced who I am today. Growing up in an international school has ensured that forging my own identity will be an ongoing process. A process that isn't likely to be concluded anytime soon—and I'm OK with that.

■ Meg Ito is a student at a university in the U.S., and working as a Metropolis intern over the summer.



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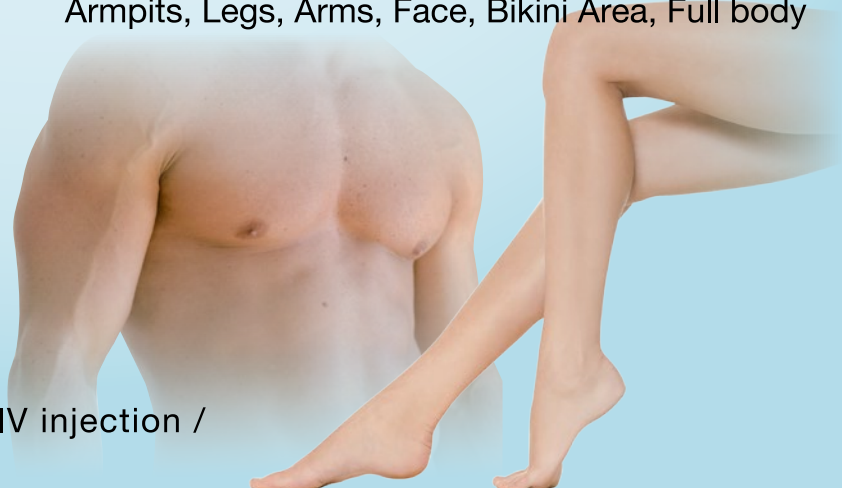
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